Claims:

1 Apparatus for use in handling a load comprising a load-bearing rope, a mechanism for paying out and recovering the load-bearing rope, a service cable and a service cable holder for holding the service cable, a first wrapping device for rotating one of the service cable and the load-bearing rope around the other as they are payed out to wrap the two together, and to unwrap them from one another as they are recovered, a mechanism for holding and paying out a securing member, and a second wrapping device for wrapping the securing member around the service cable and the load-bearing rope, and to unwrap the securing member from the service cable and load-bearing rope as either of them is recovered.

2 Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the securing member is in the form of a planar strip, tape or ribbon.

3 Apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the securing member is resilient.

4 Apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the securing member is tensioned as it is applied to the rope.

5 Apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the first wrapping device rotates a service

cable drum in a circular path around the axis of the rope.

6 Apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 1-4, wherein the service cable is stored on a drum having an axis that is co-axial with the axis of the rope and wherein the service cable wrapping device rotates around the drum to pay out the service cable.

7 Apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the securing member is stored on a securing member drum and wherein the second wrapping device rotates the securing member drum in a circular path around the axis of the rope.

8 Apparatus as claimed in one of claims 1-6, wherein the securing member is stored on a drum that has an axis which coincides with the axis of the load-bearing rope, the securing member drum having a central aperture through which the load-bearing rope passes, and wherein the securing member passes over a sheave which is mounted for movement in a circular path around the axis of the load-bearing rope.

9 Apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the second winding device is arranged to discharge the securing member radially outward of the service cable to wind the securing member around the service cable and the load-bearing rope.

10 Apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the securing member comprises an elastic strip with a non-elastic reinforcing member to limit the maximum extension of the securing member.

11 Apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the securing member incorporates an adhesive to hold the securing member to the rope and service cable.

12 Apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the wrapping devices are arranged to pay out the service cable and/or the securing member close to the axis of the rope.

13 Apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, having more than one service cable wrapping device to accommodate respective service cables and to wrap them on to the rope.

14 Apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, having guide means to guide the service cable(s), the securing member and/or the rope, the guide means comprising at least one roller or sheave.

15 Apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the guide means comprises a roller cage provided around the circumference of the securing member, the guide means and/or the rope.

16 A method for use in handling a load, comprising:

paying out a load-bearing rope;
paying out a service cable;
wrapping one of the rope and the service cable around the other as they are being paid out;
wrapping a securing member around the service cable and load-bearing rope as they are being paid out;
and subsequently unwrapping the securing member and service cable from the load-bearing rope as the load-bearing rope is recovered.

17 A method as claimed in claim 16, wherein the securing member is wound around the load-bearing rope in the opposite direction to the service cable.

18 A method as claimed in claim 16 or claim 17, wherein the securing member is wrapped around the rope and service cable(s) only at intervals along the rope.

19 A method as claimed in claim 16, wherein the securing member is wrapped continuously around the length of the rope as it is payed out.

20 A method as claimed in any one of claims 16-19, wherein the securing member is tensioned as it is wound around the rope.

21 A method as claimed in any one of claims 16-20, wherein tape is applied intermittently on top of the securing member.

22 A method as claimed in any one of claims 16-21, wherein at least two service cables are entwined with the rope before the securing member is applied.